

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING JIMMY LAI

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 3, 2021

Mr. McGOVERN. Madam Speaker, on December 3, 2020, one year ago, Jimmy Chee-ying Lai, founder of the now shuttered Hong Kong pro-democracy newspaper the Apple Daily, was denied bail for the first time. He has since been convicted and sentenced and will spend his 74th birthday on December 8 behind bars.

Jimmy Lai's life epitomizes the rise and fall of Hong Kong's freedoms.

Mr. Lai was born in Guangzhou, Guangdong, in China in 1947. At the age of 12, he entered Hong Kong as a stowaway on a fishing boat. He found work at a garment factory and rose from an odd-job laborer to a manager. In 1975, he bought a bankrupt garment factory and built riches with an Asia-wide clothing chain, Giordano. In interview after interview, Jimmy recalled, "I came here with one dollar, the freedom here has given me the opportunity to build myself up."

The Tiananmen protests of 1989 in China motivated Jimmy to turn his attention from economic opportunities to civil and political freedom. "You deliver information, then you deliver choice, and choice is freedom," he recounted. In 1990, he began publishing Next Magazine with a formula of tabloid-style sensationalism combined with investigative exposés of political and business elites.

In 1995, just two years before Hong Kong's return to China, Jimmy founded the Apple Daily with the catchy slogan "An apple a day keeps the liars away." Against charges that the newspaper was anti-Chinese Communist Party, he retorted that "if we run this newspaper based on hatred of communism, we will fail." Instead, "all we need is to love what we love most, which is freedom of speech and freedom of the press."

This love of freedom is, however, anathema to the Chinese government's goals. When Hong Kongers protested against national security legislation on July 1, 2003, Jimmy's publications urged readers to take to the streets and called for the then Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa to resign.

During the 2014 Umbrella Movement, the Apple Daily was again at the forefront of the call for "genuine universal suffrage." Jimmy camped out at the occupy site in Admiralty near the Central Government Offices. When the police cleared the site on December 13, 2014, he was among those arrested.

During the pro-democracy protests in 2019, the Apple Daily offered blanket coverage of the months-long protests and published hard-hitting reports on police abuses and alleged police-gangster collusion. Jimmy joined various mass demonstrations that numbered up to two million.

In early 2020 Jimmy was repeatedly arrested among other veterans of the city's pro-

democracy movement for organizing and participating in marches on August 18, August 31, and October 1, 2019. Such protests were rendered "unauthorized" simply because the police routinely refused to issue "Notices of No Objection" beginning in August. Jimmy was convicted and sentenced to a total of 20 months in prison. He faces more jail terms for attending an unauthorized candlelight vigil on June 4, 2020.

On June 30, 2020, the National People's Congress Standing Committee enacted the National Security Law to criminalize vaguely defined "subversion," "secession," "terrorism" and "collusion with foreign forces." The law removes the presumption of bail and imposes a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, thereby stifling free expression and other fundamental freedoms in contravention of Hong Kong's Basic Law. Authorities quickly came for their targets. On August 10, police arrested Jimmy, his two sons and three top Apple Daily executives for collusion with external elements and conspiracy to defraud (for violating the terms of a commercial lease). More than 200 police officers also raided the newspaper's headquarters and seized box-loads of documents. On December 3, a court denied Jimmy's bail application and remanded him to custody. He was briefly granted bail in *de facto* house arrest on December 23 but was remanded to custody on December 31 when the court ruled in favor of the Department of Justice's appeal. On February 16, 2021, Jimmy was arrested under the national security law and "perverting the course of justice" for aiding activist Andy Li in his failed attempt to flee to Taiwan.

Locking up Jimmy Lai did not silence the Apple Daily. After the arrest and raid on August 10, 2020, the newspaper published on its front page a photo of Jimmy in handcuffs with the headline "Apple Daily must fight on." In his last media interview with the BBC in December 2020, he remarked that "If they can induce fear in you, that's the cheapest way to control you and the most effective way and they know it. The only way to defeat the way of intimidation is to face up to fear and don't let it frighten you." Journalists at the Apple Daily heroically kept up the fight in subsequent months. In the end, the authorities could strangle the newspaper only by freezing its company accounts in June 2021.

Jimmy said that "Hong Kong . . . made me what I am today" and thus he chose to stay in Hong Kong despite the severe consequences. In truth, Jimmy also made Hong Kong what it was yesterday, by defending freedoms for as long as he could.

Jimmy's fearlessness has been honored with the Gwen Ifill Press Freedom Award by the Committee to Protect Journalists in 2021, the Freedom of Press Award by Reporters Without Borders and the Faith and Freedom Award by the Acton Institute in 2020.

Madam Speaker, as cochair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China I will continue to advocate for the freedoms and human rights of the people of Hong Kong, including Jimmy Lai.

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER OF
LONNIE BRAXTON

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 3, 2021

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the commendable career of a dedicated public servant and important figure in southeastern Connecticut, Lonnie Braxton. After 24 years of service as the Senior Assistant State's Attorney for juvenile matters for New London County, Lonnie retires on December 14th, 2021. Throughout his career, Lonnie has been a stalwart guardian defending civil rights within his community and a source of wisdom and guidance through his leadership positions within the State and local branches of the NAACP. Though the setting of Lonnie's public service has evolved throughout his career, his north star has always been driven by his mission to assist others. He has served honorably throughout his career, representing a true commitment to civil rights and justice.

Born in 1948, Lonnie was raised in Greenville, Mississippi where he attended high school and signaled his high level of competence, joining the U.S. Navy Reserves by his sophomore year. Upon his graduation, he served 18 months on Active Duty aboard the USS *Amphion* AR-13. After completing his Active Duty service with the Navy, our region became lucky enough for Lonnie to take a job with the submarine manufacturer Electric Boat in Groton, ultimately causing him to choose southeastern Connecticut as his new home. Lonnie went to work at Electric Boat for 10 years, holding various positions including electronics mechanic, radiation control monitor, property control analyst, and technical administrator in the material department. His technical skills and expertise were highly prized in an enterprise that adheres to a standard of excellence. He knew from his naval service that the lives of sailors depended on doing the job right.

Lonnie, of course, was destined to help his community in a different way—to make sure our courts protected the rights of every citizen young or old who came into contact with the criminal justice system. Following his time with Electric Boat, Lonnie went on to further his education, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Government from Connecticut College in 1986 and subsequently a Juris Doctorate from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1988. He immediately immersed himself in legal work, where he gained the experience that prepared him for his paramount work as a Senior Assistant State's Attorney with the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice. Since 1997, he has worked in Juvenile Court where he has furthered the agency's mission of promoting restorative justice, accountability, and rehabilitation. Lonnie overcame all resistance faced in his career, relentlessly representing every member of his community in the courtroom.

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